

Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference

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The Hiawatha Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and River Country RC&D Councils held a two-day Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference January 22 and January 23, 2009. This year's conference theme was "Profiting from Renewable Energy & Regional Food. The event took place at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, Minnesota and was the 11th year for this conference.

People interested in value-added enterprises attended this conference. The two day conference featured workshop sessions on marketing, business management, regional food, and bio-energy topics. Conference presenters included many farm entrepreneurs, industry professionals and representatives from government and non-governmental organizations from Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Locally grown foods were showcased at all meals and breaks during the conference. Over 220 people attended this year's conference in Rochester.

The Tradeshow offered a wide variety of exhibitors providing educational information and materials. Several local agricultural entrepreneurs showcased their locally grown agricultural products. Conference breaks occurred in the exhibit area providing ample opportunities for conference attendees to network and obtain additional resources to make their agricultural operation more successful!

Debra Walchuk, MN NRCS State Outreach Coordinator served as one of the conference break-out speakers. Walchuk gave a brief presentation on the 2008 Farm Bill and shared a synopsis of the programs NRCS will be involved in. Additionally, Walchuk shared NRCS resource tools with the audience, including: EFOTG, Energy estimators for animal housing, irrigation and other technical information.

Employees from the Farm Service Agency and Rural Development provided details on programs their agency will be utilizing in 2009. Numerous handouts were made available for those in attendance at the workshop.

The purpose of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program is to accelerate the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. It improves the capability of State, tribal and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop and carry out programs for resource conservation and development. The program also establishes or improves coordination systems in rural areas.



Folks like Herby Radmann (left), soul-proprietor of The Bullfrog Fish Farm, and Lonnie Dietz (right) of Whitewater Gardens and Hiawatha Valley RC&D Council member, share their entrepreneurial experiences to make the Midwest Value Added Ag Conference a huge